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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
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COMMENT ON EGYPTIAN SITUATION

The disappearance of a British airman from the canal town of Ismailia on 9 July and Egypt's flat rejection of a British ultimatum demanding his return by 0900 hours, 13 July, have created new tensions in the Anglo-Egyptian dispute. Upon the expiration of the ultimatum, British troops moved into Ismailia and established controls over all movements. Sporadic shooting is being reported. This situation could set off widespread guerrilla attacks against the British forces in the Suez canal base.

It is not clear why the British have chosen the disappearance of an airman to force the issue at this time. Minister of State Selwyn Lloyd declared in Commons that there are "strong grounds" for suspecting that an Egyptian army officer assisted in the abduction of the airman. The British appear to be prepared to risk the consequences to implement their present firm policy toward Egypt. Their action will not bring closer the resumption of the suspended Anglo-Egyptian talks, and coming at the time of the Dulles-Salisbury-Bidault conference, it highlights again the seriousness of the situation.

The army regime, which flatly rejected the British "ultimatum," has declared that Egypt will "wait and see" what action Britain takes following the expiration of the ultimatum. It is unlikely that the regime wishes to engage in widespread guerrilla activities at this time and there is no indication that it sought the present crisis.

The leaders, sensitive on the subject of sovereignty, can be expected to remain obdurate in their refusal to accept the British ultimatum. They will use this incident as added evidence that the mere presence of British troops is a threat to Egyptian independence.

Major Salam called on the people to prepare for battle but to avoid anti-British action until ordered. He reaffirmed recent statements that Egypt would decide the time and place for the "war of liberation."

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The military regime, which is probably able to keep the situation under control, still hopes for a Washington-inspired solution. Should the regime, however, become convinced that this will not be forthcoming and should it decide that the popular mood does not permit delay, the army group would probably encourage guerrilla and terroristic activity against British personnel and installations.

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